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WASHINGTON TIMES 25 November 1982 (26) Pg. 4

Tower backs MX dense-pack basing 'if'

BY A WASHINGTON TIMES STAFF WRITER

In supporting the dense-pack basing mode for the MX missile, Sen. John Tower, R-Tex., is using the "if" defense.

In a wide-ranging discussion with reporters over the merits of the system, Tower, the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, repeatedly prefaced his support for dense pack with the word "if."

"If the date we have is correct," Tower said yesterday during the taping of the CBS radio program "Capitol Cloakroom," then President Reagan made the right decision Monday in selecting dense pack out of more than 30 different basing options that have been studied over the last several years.

To another question the senator again replied with a qualifier, saying "if the system will work as billed."

Congress has authorized building of the new intercontinental ballistic missile, which is scheduled for its first test flight in January, but money for deploying the MX (for missile experimental) is being held up by Congress until it examines the dense-pack plan.

Legislation required the president to report to Congress on the basing mode by Dec. 1. Congress has 30 legislative days in which to disapprove the decision.

Another option, which Sen. Ernest Hollings, D-S.C., said he will attempt is to delete production funds for MX through an amendment to the fiscal year 1983 Defense Appropriation bill.

In a press release issued the day the president announced his decision, Tower was equally circumspect:

"I am cautiously hopeful that (dense pack) will provide the desired measure of survivability," he said.

Yesterday the senator said two of the issues that Congress will have to examine are the viability of the "fratricide" theory and the effectiveness of super-hardening of MX silos.

Under the dense-pack basing mode selected by the president, 100 MX missiles would be spaced 1,800 feet apart in a strip 1.5 miles wide and 14 miles long. The missile field would be at Warren Air Force Base near Cheyenne, Wyo.

Because of the closeness of the missiles, defense analysts have theorized that

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Navy F18 Said to Get 'Qualified Yes' as Bomber

Associated Press

A Navy panel is tentatively recommending that the F18 jet be used as a carrier-based bomber as well as a fighter, but says the plane's range must be extended, Pentagon sources say.

The sources said that the panel's recommendation will go to Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger. The ultimate decision on using the F18 as a carrier-based bomber will be made by a committee of senior defense officials.

The sources, who asked for anonymity, said that the panel, including Navy Secretary John F. Lehman Jr. and other top Navy civilian officials and admirals, reached its decision after studying reports on flight tests.

These tests showed that the F18 failed to meet range goals for carrier-based bombing flights without refueling in the air. According to various sources, the F18 fell about 100 miles short of the planned range of 550 nautical miles when carrying bombs against land targets.

The recommendation is reported to endorse procurement of more than 80 F18s under the fiscal 1984 defense budget, which will go to Congress early next year.

However, the Navy panel was said to have withheld approval of multiyear procurement of the carrier-based attack version of the F18, which represents a potential ultimate purchase of nearly 800 planes.

"The recommendation represents a qualified yes to the question of going ahead with production of the carrier-based version," said one source.

Overall, the Navy has a plan to buy 1,366 F18s for nearly \$40 billion, making the program one of the most expensive in a long list of weapons under development and in production.

The F18 previously had won top-level approval for its role as a fighter for both the Navy and Marine Corps. The plane, called the Hornet, is designed to replace both aging F4 fighters and A7 bombers.

an attacking swarm of Soviet missiles would destroy or deflect one another by their explosions in what has been dubbed "fratricide."

A second part of the dense pack rationale is that the silos for MX could be super-hardened to withstand atomic blasts well beyond anything being used in silos today.

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Soviets Assert MX Violates Arms Treaties

By Dusko Doder
Washington Post Foreign Service

MOSCOW, Nov. 25—The Soviet Union said today that President Reagan's plan for deploying the MX missile would breach Soviet-American strategic arms limitation (SALT) treaties and bluntly accused him of using "seemingly peace-loving terms" to obscure his quest for strategic superiority.

The new Kremlin leadership gave its authoritative reply to Reagan's Nov. 23 speech on deploying the MX in an unsigned 3,000-word editorial in the Communist Party newspaper Pravda, which clearly had top-level approval.

The editorial reaffirmed the Soviet leaders' readiness to negotiate an "honest agreement" with the United States. But, it said, the Reagan administration, "judging by everything, does not wish to look for a reasonable and mutually acceptable accord."

If the MX deployment does get under way, the editorial said, the Soviet Union will find "an effective way to reply to Washington."

The statement purported to "ascertain and compare the essence of the positions" of the two superpowers "on problems whose solution will largely determine the destinies of mankind."

The tone of the editorial suggested that the new leadership under Yuri Andropov may adopt confrontational policies if the Reagan administration continues its arms buildup.

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